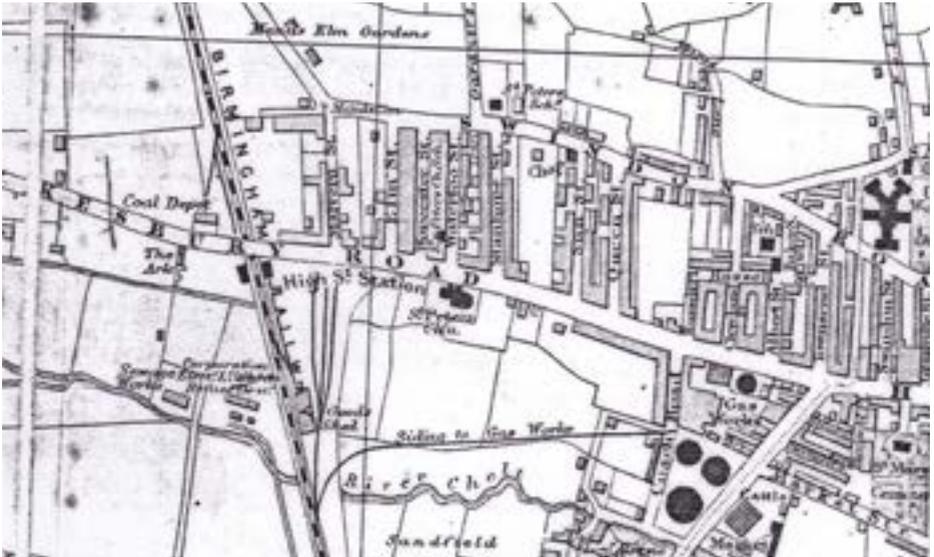


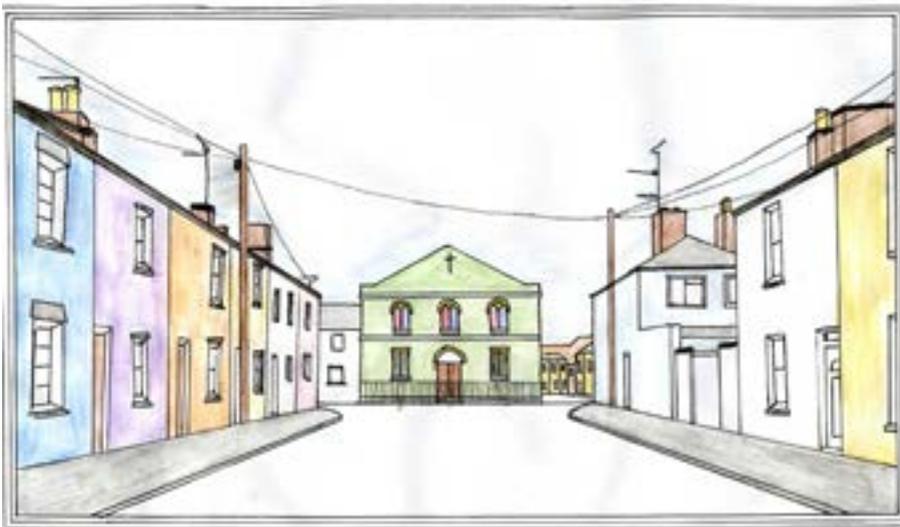
TRAVELS THROUGH LOWER DOCKEM



A GUIDE TO ST PETER'S AND THE MOORS, CHELTENHAM

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27 January 2015



Top: Gas Green Baptist Church by Rachel Brown

Front cover: St Peter's and the Moors area, section from Bacon's 1905
Plan of Cheltenham

CONTENTS PAGE

Introduction	4
Individual areas of research:	
1. Sharon Wilson	6
2. Nancy Chadwick	8
3. Owen Whittle	10
4. Rachel Brown	12
5. Andy Houghton	14
Examples of residents' contributions	16
Group mind map	18
About the sound map	20
Group ideas for local action	21
Conclusions	22
References	23

INTRODUCTION

Project

This guide describes a project carried out in response to the Big Local, a £1m fund from the Big Lottery Fund. It gives St Peter's and the Moors (St Peter's) an opportunity to implement changes, making it a better place to live. The brief was to understand the area and the residents and come up with a creative project based on what we discovered. This knowledge would then inform our ideas for local action, ways in which we could improve the community, or bring it together.

Important to all areas of St Peter's are the railway, Swindon Road and Tewkesbury Road, but it is the latter that also divides the community. Lower Dockem or Dockum was once the local name for the area and possibly referred to someone appearing in the dock at the local police station.

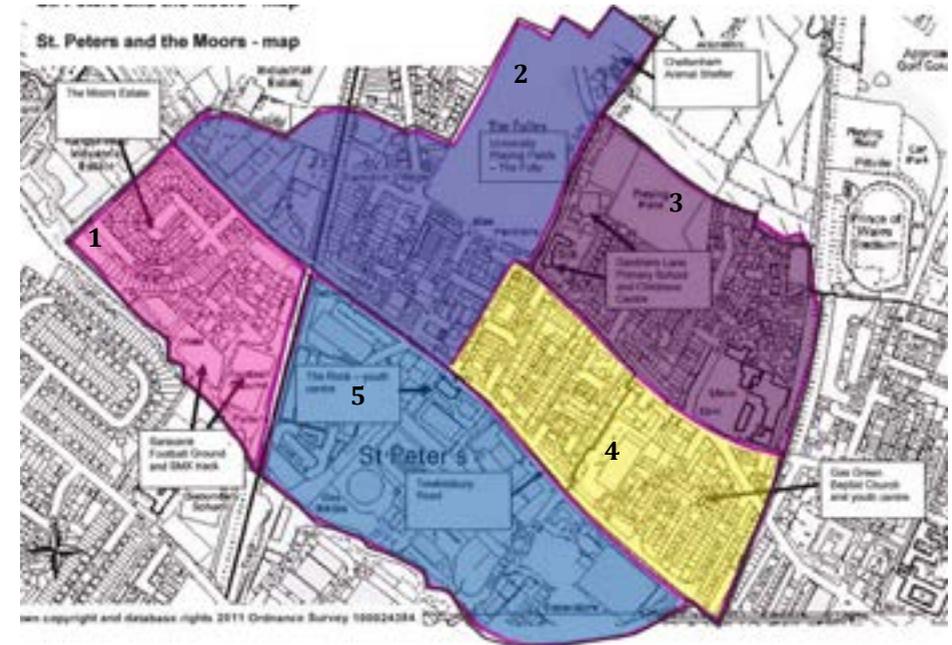
Methodology

In order to familiarise ourselves with St Peter's, we walked around the area, as a class, as a group, as well as individually, making notes and taking photographs. During brainstorming sessions, the group made a character map and discussed a variety of creative projects:

- coloured map showing different emotions inspired by different areas;
- luggage tags photographed in different locations around St Peter's;
- different parts of St Peter's set around A1 sheet with links/connections across;
- create a sound map in a film, recording the stories and history of the area.

We decided the latter would be the best as a group project as it could include all elements of the brief. The following informed our ideas:

- we visited The Rock community centre and recorded some of the



Map of St Peter's divided into five areas (Cheltenham Borough Council)

- residents' stories about living in the area;
- we divided St Peter's into five smaller sections, each group member taking one area on which to concentrate, to uncover the layers of history and character of each place;
- we visited Gardeners Lane Primary School and worked with children to understand their view of where they live and recorded some of their ideas;
- we held group meetings and kept in touch by email to discuss our ideas about the content of the film.

The five areas covered by the individual group members were:

1. Moors estate, BMX and Saracens ground - Sharon
2. Industrial estate, Maud's elm, Folley to Waterloo Rd - Nancy
3. Elmfield, school, playing field Marshes and Uni - Owen
4. Waterloo Rd to Gas Green area - Rachel
5. Rock, old gas works area and subway/rest garden - Andy

We also recorded our personal journeys around these areas in words and film.



1-3 Alongside Railways and Carriageways 4 The BMX Track Ghosts 5-8 The Language of the Weir 9 A Storm Brewing in Brook Road 10-12 The Moors Estate 13 Brickwork History

THE MOORS, SARACENS GROUND, BMX TRACK, SHARON WILSON

History

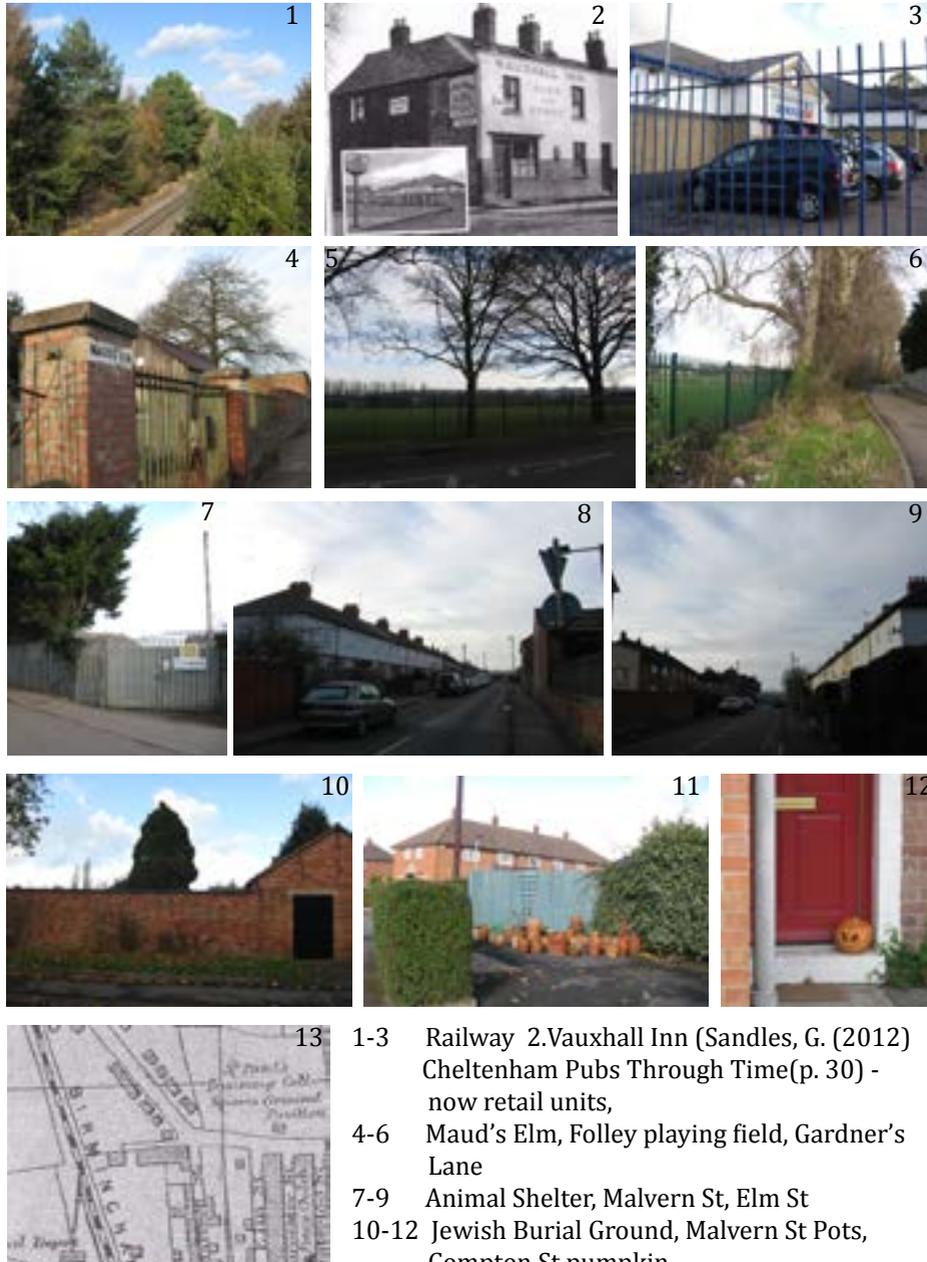
The Moors was originally predominantly orchard and market garden land. Jessops Nursery was established in 1821 by Charles Hale Jessop over 20 acres. As well as commercial greenhouses and flower beds, it boasted botanical and zoological gardens. Part of the nursery was sold in 1844 to GWR and the rest of the nursery closed in 1871. The lower classes found work on the market gardens and working at slaughter houses in the area and at the tanneries that were situated along the river's edge. In 1690

the Cheltenham Manor Court Book, steward, John Prinn wrote 'It's soil is sandy and very naturale for carrets, cabbages, and turnips, insomuch that the whole neighbourhood for sundry milesaround it is annually furnished with these three from this town'. The first housing for the poor was built in St Paul's as '1 down and 2 up' terraces. The workers from the moor would have lived here until more housing was built later in St Peters alongside the Tewkesbury Road. The houses were overcrowded with poor utilities and were badly maintained. Some of the housing in Peters was eventually demolished in the late 1920s as part of the slum clearance scheme. The Moors Estate was built from 1934, originally 130 houses on 12 acres (Cheltenham4u).

Inspiring Walk

From the Tewkesbury Road I walked along Brook Road into Moors Avenue, around St Peters Square and St Peters Close and then back through the scenic route past Saracen's Football Club, the old BMX track and the Weir. I feel that I have been lucky to get this area. The streets are open and wide and on the whole well maintained. There are lots of houses where people have taken pride in their homes and used plants, colour and personal belongings to decorate their homes in a unique way. I love the tree at the end of Brook Road, it stands proud against the backdrop of commercial buildings that can be seen across the busy Tewkesbury Road.

The Moors Estate is sectioned off from its surroundings by the busy road and also features such as the weir and the football ground. Rather than a feeling of isolation there I feel a strong community. A lady with a pram walks along in front of me with a pram chatting to a man about her neighbours and friends. Three older gentlemen call to each other across the road in Gloucestershire accents. Maureen and Louie, two sisters at the Rock Café tell me about growing up in Brook Road with their friend Pauline. The Cinema club they ran in their shed, the games they played in the street and about marrying local boys. The weir is beautiful and alive and the BMX track holds memories of times past. The Moors might be 'forgotten' by some parts of Cheltenham but the residents there are alive and well, creating homes, memories, relationships, identity, attachments and most importantly; a strong community.



1-3 Railway 2.Vauxhall Inn (Sandles, G. (2012) Cheltenham Pubs Through Time(p. 30) - now retail units,
 4-6 Maud's Elm, Folley playing field, Gardner's Lane
 7-9 Animal Shelter, Malvern St, Elm St
 10-12 Jewish Burial Ground, Malvern St Pots, Compton St pumpkin
 13 Section of ward map (1939 Borough of Cheltenham Ward Map (Dec 1939))

MANCHESTER PARK TO WATERLOO STREET, NANCY CHADWICK

History

The 1854 map shows that much of this area had been orchards with some scattered housing. The Folly was the site of the earliest house, shown in 1800s on land owned by John Cook, known as 'Cook's Folly'. The Folley is now the name of the University of Gloucestershire's sports ground. Maud's Elm, originally Maule's or Mowles Elm, was a landmark tree which stood in the area until 1907, around which grew a great myth of mystery and murder. Maud's Elm House built after the war commemorates the name, as possibly does Elm Street. Bridge Street, named after the bridge over the railway, is part of Maud's Elm Estate, as is Richards Road. A coal depot stood where is now Manchester Park industrial estate. There was mentioned St Peter's Church School located in the area adjacent to what was Worcester Street. The Vauxhall Inn which stood on the corner of Malvern Street was rebuilt in the 1960s, later becoming the Last Drop, then the Sportsman, now retail units. The Jewish Burial Ground on the corner of Elm Street, originally purchased in 1824, is attached to the Synagogue in Cheltenham.

Inspiring Walk

The main features include the Folley playing field, Maude's Elm Estate and Jewish Burial Ground. Manchester Park, lies to the east of the railway which cuts through the area. Here is a mix of industrial and residential with some retail along the Tewkesbury Road. The residential character is a combination of old and new, having developed over time, with flats and houses of many styles. Despite its proximity to the busy Tewkesbury Road and railway line, it seems very quiet here. The large green of the Folley provides great contrast to the surrounding area with a great deal of nature evident from the sounds of bird song. From the Tewkesbury Road, cut through to Malvern Street, past Maud's Elm House along Swindon Lane and playing field and down Gardner's Lane to the animal shelter to appreciate the natural surroundings. Here, it feels more sheltered, almost like the countryside, the field providing a sense of separation from the busy road. Then back to Elm Street and along to the Jewish Burial Ground to reflect on the history of the area.

GARDNER'S LANE SCHOOL TO HARDWICK - OWEN WHITTLE

History and Inspiring Walk

The area northeast of Swindon road is an intriguing area, firstly as it houses two of the main educational buildings in the Moors (the primary school and the university campus) and secondly for its mix of buildings and architecture. If you look along Gardner's Lane between 8:30 and 9 o'clock, you will find it bustling with the noisy chatter and laughter of the school kids on their way to Gardner's lane primary school. The school was formed in sept 1998 by combining Elmfield Juniors with Cleeve view Infants . The building itself is a beautiful redbrick building with decorative eaves, vibrant mature maples and ornate cast iron fencing bordering it along Swindon road. One could feel safe sending their kids to a school whose ethos is "If a child lives with criticism he learns to condemn"..... but....."If a child lives with approval; he learns to like himself" [Gardeners Lane Primary School 2014].

The lane itself is believed to have got its name from the Gardener brewing family who owned land around Saint Pauls. As you move further along Swindon road; Elmfield road appears on your left. With its semi-detached houses and vibrant front gardens, one can see the neighbourhood is long since been established. When you stroll down to the end of the road you can't help but feel refreshed as your enter the expansive area of the playing fields, which was once market gardens in the early 1920's [Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton 1923]. One can see how at times this area is a hive of activity with dog walkers coming through, its modern playground and football pitches. On clear day you can see Cleeve Hill behind the two stories houses capped with solar panels on the opposite side of the park, which gives an indication of Cheltenham's sustainable ethos. If you turn right through the mature trees that divide the park, one can't help but feel intrigued by the unusual architecture of the houses that peek over the

fence to your right.

As I turned up to the right to find out more, I found myself on Midwinter Avenue lined on either side with prefabricated houses, intervened every so often by some redbrick. The view reminds me of long summer holidays in the south of Ireland.

Turning back down the street and taking a right through to Marsh Lane which although the redbrick houses to the left are recently built, the road itself is over a hundred years old. The terraced houses on the right as you go back towards Swindon road have been there since before 1885 [Bacon 1885]. To the left is more modern Hardwick of the University of Gloucestershire. The campus focuses on art and photography, adding to the ever changing architecture and visual environment on the short walk from Gardener's Lane to Hardwick campus.



Top: Midwinter Avenue
Bottom: Elmfield playing field



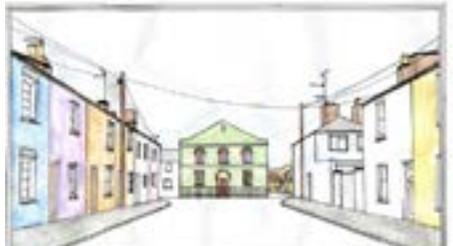
During 1937 there were many parties held all over Cheltenham to celebrate the Coronation of King George VI.



It was party time again in 1945. This area of Cheltenham had suffered during the war and in Waterloo Street they were happy to celebrate VE Day. Some of the children photographed at the party in 1937 are now young adults in this picture.



In 1953 there was another coronation to celebrate, this time for Queen Elizabeth II.



Drawing of Gas Green Church emphasising the colours of the houses around it and showing the pretty view.

(Photographs: Heasman, E., (2003). *Images of England: Cheltenham Volume II*, pages 113-114)

WATERLOO STREET TO GAS GREEN, RACHEL BROWN

History

There is a First World War tragedy associated with Charles Street. Number 24 was the home of Richard and Rosetta Mason whose three sons were all killed in the trenches. In peace time the three had worked for the Gloucestershire Echo. The eldest, Joe Mason, joined up early in the war and was sent home in 1915 after being gassed and wounded at Ypres. No sooner had he re-joined his battalion when he was wounded again. After a spell in hospital he was sent out to fight a third time, and won the Military Medal on October 1917 for bravery. A month later he was killed during the Battle of Cambrai, aged only 26 and leaving behind a widow, Emily, and a child. The middle son Harold also enlisted at the start of the war and was sent home after suffering a burned arm in the trenches in 1915. In March 1916 he was back in the front line trenches at Neuve Chapelle when he was hit by a trench mortar, and was buried in a nearby British cemetery, he was 22. The youngest son Frederick was a messenger boy at the Gloucestershire Echo and aged only 18 when he was killed in August 1916 at the Battle of the Somme.

Inspiring Walk

As you walk along Townsend Street you pass the Adam and Eve pub, then turning down Russell Street you can see the gas green Baptist church which has interesting blue and red windows. Turning right down Cleeve-land Street you get a view of green space of Harwick Campus at the end. Turn right onto Swindon road and as you walk down it you can see similar looking houses but they have their own individual character with brightly painted doors and different plants in their front gardens. After enjoying the walk through the houses of Swindon road you can turn left onto Queen Street then right to look at a beautiful tree on Sun Street. Turning right again brings you back to Swindon Road through a footpath that goes past a lovely brick building with a red door. After walking further along Swindon road you can see the Gardeners Lane primary school and the Folley before turning left onto Waterloo Street which has a view of The Rock and some bright red berries hanging over the pavement.

GAS WORKS AREA - ANDY HOUGHTON

Inspiring walk

Stood at the junction of Gloucester and Tewkesbury road. One cannot fail to miss the architectural beauty and craftsmanship that beholds the original office building of the Gas and Coke Company. The level of decoration in the bricks and attention to detail in the mortar joints is unique, and achieves the symbolism of power and wealth, common to such buildings constructed during the period.

Heading west down the Tewkesbury road, the site of the old gas works is currently a busy commercial hub. Retailers, manufacturers and service providers trade from more modern buildings:

- Tesco + petrol
- Volkswagen car dealers
- Engineering firms
- Small business units

The sensory experience when walking through this area is mixed. Old 20th century buildings of red engineering brick construction contrast with modern steel, and composite material facades, which are somewhat visually unconnected. The feel is one associated with inner city industrial districts. Smells of works with perceptions of functionality in the busy lives of toiling men and women.

Further along the busy artery of the Tewkesbury road, we approach the hump of the bridge over the main railway line through Cheltenham. On our approach we look left and see the Range retail outlet, Oakland furniture store, and Kwik-Fit tyre centre. All varied in building material and detail. Altogether a hive of busyness as needs are brought to fruition.

The bridge ascends out of commerce to a peak that delivers views of residences, green fields to the left, distant rolling hills to the west and north.

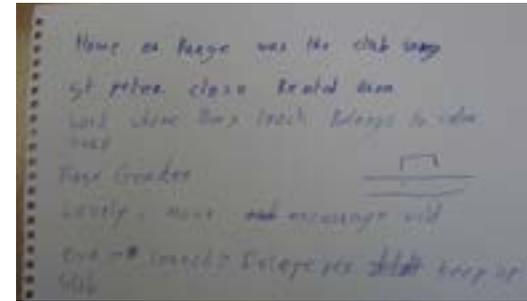
Still subjected to the sound of busy traffic racing along the dual carriage-way. We encounter an altogether unexpected challenge! A long abandoned and unmaintained pedestrian subterranean subway system, intent on safely traversing the no man's land of tarmac, fast moving traffic, and mettle railings. As we look down the entrances are blocked with converging flood water and the clutter of refuse. Despite this confusion the artistic young have articulated their expression of life through graffiti on the walls. Many symbols and doodles indicate flourishing artistic individuals, committed to developing their style.

Once the busy road is crossed to the other subway entrance. We look down the steps into the impassable soup of debris. Here again we find inspiration through nature, as pioneer plant species such as buddleia and rosebay willow herb have established flourishing communities in the niche havens of abandoned civic places. From this bridge vantage point our gaze is drawn to the north and right of the railway line. Here. Now fenced off from the passing public we get a glimpse of a secret garden. Once used by walkers to rest on benches while on their journey. This garden with brick pillars that once supported a timber pergola, covered in climbing flowering plants. Is now a remnant of its former 20th century self. Inaccessible, but full of promise and gazing at us, as we gaze at it. Almost crying out like a siren as we pass, for us to reveal its secrets.



Above: The Secret Garden

EXAMPLES OF RESIDENTS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROJECT



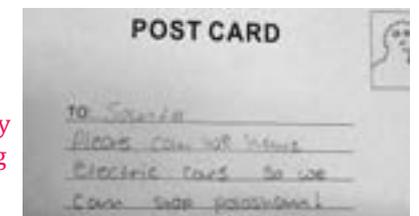
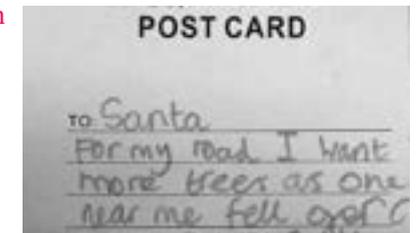
Stories from The Rock, Community Cafe - Sharon Wilson

“Some of the children drew some pictures. We marked on a map where the people we spoke to lived and then asked them to either write out a luggage label or make a voice recording (or both) about something positive about SP&TM. The kitchen helpers weren't local so they wrote about The Rock.

We have some stories that the older ladies told us. For example, one lady had lived there all her life, she was 75. She came to the Café with her sister in law and her sister. They had been bridesmaids at her wedding. She said people married within the estate back then but then the Irish navvies came along in the late 50s and some women married them.

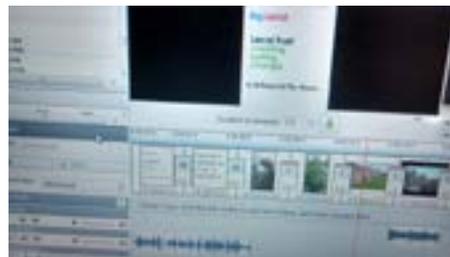
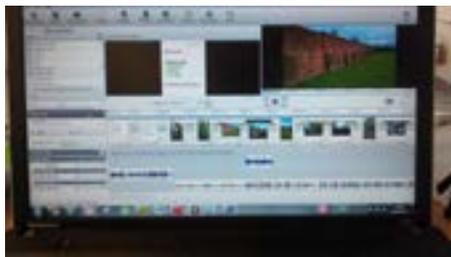
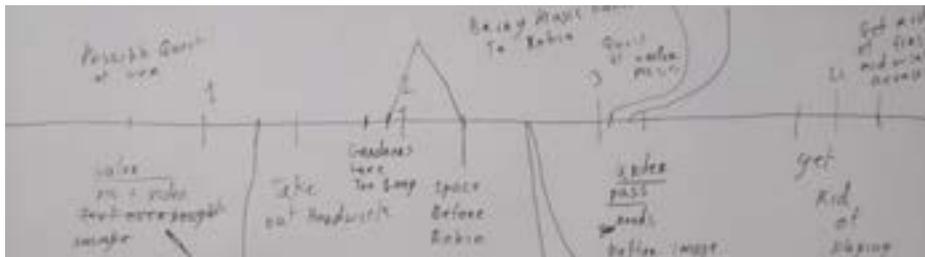
One lady had moved to the area with her 9 children because her benefits got cut and she had no choice. Her oldest daughter now has a baby of her own but goes back to see her mum every day. One of her sons really enjoys walking along the Tewkesbury Road every day on the way to school because he enjoys seeing the traffic.”

Staff and residents at The Rock, luggage tags and artwork. Postcards from Gardeners School pupils.



ABOUT THE SOUND MAP

Our thinking behind the film has been to capture a visual representation of the community, the people in it, and their environment. We wanted to represent the atmosphere, sights, sounds and thoughts of St Peter's and the Moors in a multifaceted way that will speak to the community. We felt that photographs alone were not strong enough to do this. We wanted to record the voice of the community and explore what is distinctive and special about the place through a cinematic derive.



Above: Planning and making the film

GROUP IDEAS FOR LOCAL ACTION

Following on from the creative project, the group thought about ideas for local action:

- Host a pot plant street party for residents where everyone gets together to eat, drink and move small plants into bigger pots to take home and look after in their front gardens. People can see how each other's grow and then a year later and give prizes for the plant that has been the best cared for and progressed the most. A good plant would be a tomato plant as people could taste the fruit from different plants and see which is the nicest;
- Bring residents together by involving them in a community art project. Residents could photograph, draw or paint something that inspires them about St Peter's perhaps with an explanation of the artwork. These could then be put together as a collage to be displayed at St Peter's Church. There could be workshops at The Rock to facilitate this.
- Re-establish the 'secret garden'. Many walk this route every day and the addition of this place of rest and reflection would enhance any mind on their journey. Volunteers and funding could be mustered through the Big Local initiative.
- A 'Gardening Bank'. A 'bank' of hours for the elderly/those in need. People with a few hours of time to give will make a note of their contact details and what they are able to offer (mowing, digging, weeding etc.). These will be managed by someone at the rock. I could teach some basic skills, pruning, hedge cutting etc. which will give people new skills and it will help provide a free service.
- An area of the Tewkesbury Road beyond the subway is covered in brambles. This could be turned into a vineyard by using wires and fence to create an area where people can help themselves to free blackberries.

CONCLUSION

As a group we have made many discoveries during our journey through this module. Especially during our adventures and visits to St Peter's and the Moors. Meeting and speaking with people from the community has been both an honour and a privilege. We have learnt to open our minds to perceptions of places. Understanding the wisdom in looking, seeing, hearing, identifying, and responding to what people say, and the way people use and treat their community. Seeking out the issues and culture to help them. An example of this would be our visit to Gardeners Lane School where we spent time with the local children, listening and encouraging them to discuss community matters important to them.

The group also very much enjoyed working together. Decisions were made democratically and each member was supported by their colleagues.

Once the film has been presented, we will ask the residents for their responses to it and their comments will be written on luggage labels which can be laminated, decorated and displayed in The Rock.

From this, we will decide which of our ideas for local action we will use so that the decision is based on what is important to residents.

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Maps: Cheltenham Local and Family History Library, Clarence St, Cheltenham